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MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

CLASSICAL ART

CLASSICAL CORRIDOR

SCULPTURE

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CLASSICAL ART

Classical corridor: sculpture

Department of Classical Art
Gallery Guide no. 10

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(For convenience reference is here made to an example of Assyrian sculpture, exhibited on the north wall of the East Corridor).

Relief.

This is one of a series of slabs of gray alabaster (gypsum) carved in low relief, which served as a facing for walls in rooms of the palace of King Assur-nazir-pal (about 889-859 B. C.) at Nimroud (the Calah of the Bible). Other similar reliefs are in London and Munich.

Assyrian sculptors by servilely following established precedents of earlier Babylonian art, which had in turn been borrowed from Chaldaea, failed to secure the sincerity and freedom of expression which are inspired by living models, and consequently never advanced beyond the stage of rigid formalism in their representation of human figures. The winged god or daemon, armed with a sword, carved in low relief on this slab, was regarded as a powerful, divine protector of the royal house. The work shows the conventions characteristic of Assyrian sculpture; the outlines lack the precision and sharpness of Egyptian reliefs, the proportions are untrue, and the bodily forms are heavy, flat and lifeless, but when the colors with which the stone was originally painted were still fresh and brilliant the effect was striking and highly decorative. As on Egyptian and early Greek reliefs, the head and lower part of the body are in profile, the torso and the eye in full front view. The wings are adapted to the space available at the right and have no organic connection with the figure.

A long inscription in cuniform characters adds to the decorative quality of the slab; it is the standard, official formula of Assur-nazir-pal, and is repeated on all the reliefs; it celebrates the king, recounts his conquests (and incidentally his cruelties) and records the rebuilding of the city and palace at Nimroud. The following translation is by Professor M. L. Kellner, of the Cambridge Episcopal Theological School.

(1) (This is) the palace of Assur-nazir-pal, the priest of Assur, the favorite of Bel and Adar, the beloved of Anu and Dagon, - the strong one of the great gods; the mighty king, the king of hosts, the king of

Assyria; the son of Tiglath-Adar, the great king, the mighty king, the king of hosts, the king of Assyria; the (grand) son of Raman-Nirari, (2) the king of hosts, the king of Assyria; the exalted warrior, who in reliance upon Assur, his lord, marched, and among the princes of the four regions his rival did not have; the shepherd of tab-ra-a-ti, not fearing battle; the mighty deluge, (3) who a rival did not have; the king; the subjector of those unsubmissive to him; the subduer of all the hosts of the peoples; the manly one, the mighty, treading upon the neck of his enemies, crushing all foes, breaking the might of the powerful; (4) the king, who in reliance upon the great gods, his lords, marched, and whose hand captured all of their countries, who subjected all of their wooded mountains, and who received their tribute; the receiver of hostages, the establisher of (5) authority over all countries.

At the time when the lord Assur, the namer of my name, the enlarger of my royalty, delivered his invincible weapon into my royal hands, the numerous troops of (6) the land of Lulumu in the midst of battle by means of arms I overthrew. By the help of Shamas and Raman, the gods, my helpers over the troops of the Nairian lands, the land of Kilhi, (7) the land of Shubari and the land of Nirib, like Raman the devastator, I roared.

(I am) the king who subdued unto his feet from beyond the river Tigris unto Mount Lebanon and the Great Sea, the land of Laku (8) in its entirety, the land of Suhu (cf. Job II., 11) as far as the city of Rapiku; whose hand captured from the head-waters of the river Subnat as far as the land Ararat, from the mountain-pass (9) of the land of Kiruru as far as the land of Kirzanu, from beyond the Lower Zab river as far as the city Til-baru, which is above the land of Zaban, from the city Til- (10) shabtanu as far as the city Til-shazabdanu. The city Hirimu, the city Harutu, strongholds (11) of Babylonia, unto the territory of my land I added. From the mountain-pass of the land of Babitu, as far as the land of Hashmar (12) unto the people of my land I counted. In the countries which I had subdued my officers I placed; they (i. e., the countries) became vassals.

(I am) Assur-nazir-pal, the prince, (13) the honorable, the reverencer of the great gods, the powerful wild beast, the capturer of cities and wooded mountains in their entirety, the king of lords, the consumer of mighty (foes), the protector of (14) the peaceable (or, clad in brilliance), fearless of death, the mighty, the invincible, the destroyer of opposition, the king of exaltations, the shepherd, the protector of world-regions; the king the command of whose mouth causes (15) the mountains and seas to tremble; who by

lordly attack laid one government upon the powerful, invincible kings, from the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun.

The old city of Calah, (16) which Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, a predecessor of mine, built - that city had fallen into absolute decay. That city I built anew. The people, the captives of my hand, of the countries which I had subdued, namely, the land of Suhu, all the land of Laku, (17) the city Mushku, which is beyond the Euphrates, the land of Zamna in its entirety, the land of Beth-Adin and the Hittite land, and that of Lubarna the Patinian, I gathered and within it (i. e. Calah) I set them to work. The old mound I threw down, (18) I dug down until I reached water; one hundred and twenty 'tikpi' in depth I dug. A palace of cedar, cypress, juniper, boxwood, palm, pistacia wood, and (19) tamarisk for my royal seat, befitting the dignity of my inherited majesty, upon it I placed. Beasts of the mountains and seas, of bright pili-stones and paruti-stones I made, in its gates I set up. I adorned it, (20) I made it strong. With sikat-karri of copper I surrounded it. Doors of cedar, cypress, juniper, palmwood in its gates I hung. Silver, gold, lead, copper, iron, (21) the booty of my hand of the countries which I had subdued, in large quantities I gathered together, within it I placed.

CLASSICAL ART.

Classical Corridor.

Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman Sculpture.

From the time of Alexander until the Roman conquest of Greece (from about 300 to 100 B. C.), when the influences of Hellenism were spreading through Asia Minor and Egypt, the production of Greek sculpture was no longer confined to a few great centers on the Greek mainland, as had been the case during the fifth and fourth centuries B. C. Hellenistic art in general reflects the spirit of the age in its realism, in its presentation of transitory and often of violent emotion and in its appeal both to popular approval and also, especially in the newly developed sphere of portraiture, to personal vanity. Genre subjects and episodes of daily life hitherto treated only in minor fields of art were deemed worthy of representation in sculpture, but at the same time the qualities of dignity and of impressive restraint inherited from the two preceding centuries did not entirely disappear.

After Greece became a Roman province the tide of art turned westward to Italy. Greek sculptors flocked to Rome and, ceasing to be creators, became only more or less dexterous but mechanical copyists of celebrated statues of earlier times, working to please wealthy Romans whose patronage was usually more a matter of fashion than of genuine interest or of true artistic appreciation. Portraiture alone attained real distinction during the Roman period; its direct and literal rendering of facts was a natural reflection of the objective qualities of the Roman mind.

(Beginning with the colossal seated statue of Kybele at the northeast corner of the Corridor, the following descriptions refer first to the sculpture exhibited along the window wall; then to the sculpture on the west wall, beginning again at the north end of the Corridor).

East wall.

Statue of Kybele. Hellenistic Greek. About 300 B. C.

This colossal seated figure is identified as Kybele, the Mother of the Gods, from traces of a tympanum or drum, such as was used in her worship, which was originally fitted into the circular depression below the left arm. The statue was composed of at least

two large blocks; the one at the back, which is missing, formed the throne on which the goddess sat. Her dress consists of an Ionic chiton with sleeves, and over this a himation, which probably covered the head like a veil; the part of the cloak which remains falls from the left shoulder and is draped across the knees. The high girding of the chiton is not unusual in Greek sculpture after the middle of the fourth century B. C. This statue reveals the nobler and more dignified aspects of Hellenistic art in the treatment of the drapery, the folds of which are arranged in harmonious lines richly varied but not confused by elaboration of detail. From long exposure the marble has acquired a deep golden-brown color.

Portrait head of a Greek poet or philosopher. Graeco-Roman.

This is a careful but mechanical copy, made probably in the Imperial period, of a Greek work dating from the second half of the fourth century B. C. A poet or a philosopher is indicated by the fillet which confines the hair, but the person represented is unknown. The arrangement of the hair and beard is like that on the statue of Sophocles in the Lateran Museum in Rome. The bust on which the head is set is modern.

Head of a goddess. Hellenistic Greek. Reported to have been found at Alexandria.

Gift of Mr. Edward W. Forbes.

The hair is parted above the center of the forehead and carried in wavy masses to the back of the head, where it is gathered into a knot low on the neck. The goddess wears a stephane or diadem.

Portrait of the Emperor Balbinus. Graeco-Roman.

Balbinus and Pupienus were elected Emperors by the Senate in 238 A. D., and after a brief interval were assassinated by the soldiers. This head is identified as Balbinus from its likeness to portraits on his coins. It represents a man past middle life, with a heavy, round face, coarse features, a double chin and a thick neck. The hair and beard are cut close in the style popular in the second quarter of the third century A. D. On the left shoulder is a portion of the paludamentum, or military cloak, fastened by a large, circular brooch. The bust ends below in an acanthus ornament with a griffin at each side.

Portrait of a man. Graeco-Roman.

Both in Greek and Roman times the heads and bodies of draped figures were often made of separate blocks of

marble; the juncture of head and torso was concealed by the upper edge of the drapery about the neck. On this head the base of the neck is worked for insertion, and the statue to which it belonged may have stood on the pedestal reported to have been found with it, inscribed with the name of the Consul Caius Memmius Caecilianus Placidus. The person represented is in the prime of life; he has a full, round face, heavy, wavy hair and a short beard and moustache. The eyebrows are indicated plastically, the irises are incised and the pupils hollowed out in an attempt to secure a realistic effect of reflected light. The style of the head and especially the short cut beard indicate a date early in the third century A. D.

Head of a goddess. Graeco-Roman.

Formerly in the collection at Broadlands.

The type bears a striking resemblance to the celebrated head of Aphrodite in the Museum at Arles, and the original was probably the work of Praxiteles, or at least was produced under his influence in the first half of the fourth century B. C. The upper part of this head, which was a separate piece, is missing. The eyes were of another material, inserted. In spite of the defects invariably inherent in Roman copies, the direct and simple treatment of the subject suggests the beauty and nobility of the Greek original.

Head of a youth. Graeco-Roman.

This head of an athlete is apparently a copy made in Roman times of a Greek bronze dating from the transitional period in the second quarter of the fifth century B. C. when Greek sculpture was still not entirely free from archaic mannerisms. The hair, which is unusual in being neither long as was the fashion until about the middle of the fifth century B. C., nor short as in the prevailing later style, is bound by a flat fillet and by a thin hoop. There are clusters of small, close curls above the center of the forehead and in front of the ears. The lips are full and curving, the chin long and massive, the neck large and muscular; the eyes were made of another material and inserted. Since the back of the neck is finished as a flat surface, it is probable that the head was intended to crown a herm rather than to be inset into a statue.

Head of a young satyr. Graeco-Roman.

Lent by Mr. William H. Bustin.

Long, pointed ears partly concealed by tumbled

locks of hair crowned with a wreath of pine, and a vague, elfish smile lurking about the lips and in the eyes of the boyish face, betray the wild, half animal nature of this imaginary woodland creature.

West wall.

Cock. Hellenistic Greek.

Animals were sympathetically studied in all periods of Greek sculpture, but until the end of the fourth century B. C. only those of natural dignity and larger size, such as the lion, the bull, the horse and the ram, were used as independent subjects or as subordinate parts of a composition. This lively and realistic representation of a crouching cock reflects perfectly a tendency of Hellenistic artists to choose common or even trivial themes, to which, as in this instance, they often lent elements of enduring worth by accurate observation and facility of technique. The base, the head, the left wing, the tip of the right wing and of the tail are modern.

Small female torso. Graeco-Roman.

The figure appears to have been seated or half reclining, with the body partly supported by the left arm. The right arm was bent slightly at the elbow and the hand extended. The Ionic dress of thin, clinging material has slipped down from the right shoulder. From the style of the drapery it is evident that the figure was inspired by a work of the late fifth century B. C. It is a good Roman copy, probably of the Augustan period.

Double herm: Herakles and Hebe. Graeco-Roman.

Herakles, represented as bearded and having short, curly hair bound by a wreath, is of a type which was originated (perhaps by Praxiteles) in the fourth century B. C.; the head of Hebe, crowned with a wreath of ivy, is probably derived from a work of the late fifth century B. C. Such eclecticism is not uncommon in sculpture of the early Imperial period.

Portrait bust, in the form of a herm. Graeco-Roman.

From its resemblance to a head on a marble relief in England inscribed with the name Menander, this bust has been identified as a portrait of the great poet of the New Greek Comedy (342-291 B. C.). This copy may have been derived from the statue made toward

the end of the fourth century B. C. by Kephisodotos and Timarchos, the sons of Praxiteles, the basis of which has been discovered in the Theater of Dionysos at Athens.

Relief: Sacrificial Scene. Graeco-Roman.

The block is a fragment of an architectural member, the use of which remains in doubt; on it is carved in low but sharp relief a Roman sacrificial scene. In the center is a small altar, seen in perspective, hung with garlands and having a fire burning on it. At the right stands a bearded priest draped in a long robe and wearing a mantle which is drawn up over his head as a veil; he is pouring a libation on the altar from a patera or shallow bowl. Behind him a woman advances holding in her left hand a dish containing three sacrificial cakes; she looks back toward a boy - a camillus, the priest's regular attendant - who carries a pitcher for lustral water. At the left of the altar a man (the victimarius) with a double-headed axe in his left hand drags along a goat by the horns for sacrifice. At the extreme left are traces of the figure of a woman who stood behind the goat holding in her raised left hand a box or basket, covered with a cloth. The composition of the group is well-balanced, and the poses of the figures are life-like and varied. The work is probably to be assigned to the Augustan age.

Relief. The Death of Priam. Graeco-Roman.

Neoptolemos, wearing a crested helmet and a cloak, and armed with a round shield and a sword, drags the old king by the hair from the low altar on which he has taken refuge. Hekabe, kneeling on the altar behind Priam, stretches out her arms in a frantic appeal for mercy.

The relief is a product of the neo-Attic school, - a group of Greek sculptors active in Rome in the first century B. C., who made free copies or adaptations of Greek models for Italian patrons. This work was inspired by a relief, or perhaps by a painting, of the end of the fifth century B. C. At the end of the second or the beginning of the third century A. D., the relief was used by a Roman lady as a decoration for her tomb. An earlier inscription on the side of the altar has been cut away to give place for the words AURELIA SECUNDA | SE VIVA FECIT SIBI ET SU | IS. ("Aurelia Secunda, while she herself still lived, prepared this for herself and for her family."

Bronze portrait of a man. Graeco-Roman.

Said to have been found in the Tiber near Ponte Sisto.

This head, which has been broken from a statue, is a splendid and strongly individualized example of Roman portraiture, representing an elderly man with thick hair, close cut moustache and short, curling beard. The deep furrows in the forehead, the lines about the mouth, the thin lips firmly pressed together, and the sad yet resolute expression of the eyes reveal a character which has met difficult experiences of life courageously. The subject is unknown. The style of the beard and certain technical peculiarities, such as the casting of the eyes with the head instead of inserting them in another material, and the rendering of details in the hair, eyebrows and beard by incisions in the clay model, not by engraving on the bronze itself, indicate a date in the third century A. D.

Fragment of a relief. Female torso. Graeco-Roman.

The figure of a woman is here represented in the style of the fourth century B. C. Her thin chiton is girt high in order to give freedom of movement and clings close to her body as she advances rapidly toward the left.

Fragmentary relief of a reclining man. Graeco-Roman.

An elderly man reclines on a couch covered with drapery. In his left hand he holds a large, two-handled wine cup; over his wrist hangs a cord with clusters of ring-shaped objects attached to it at intervals. At the head of the couch is a tree with a vine twined about it; the two are bound together by a fillet. The relief is perhaps from a grave monument of the first century A. D.

Fragmentary relief with the portrait of a Roman. Graeco-Roman.

The head is life size, in profile to the right. The features are those of a man of middle age, and bear some resemblance to portraits of Agrippa, the son-in-law of Augustus.

Relief. Tombstone of Hedone Petronia and her son, Philemon. Graeco-Roman.

The busts of mother and son are carved in high

relief in a shallow niche. She is an elderly woman of severe but not unpleasant countenance. Her head-dress is a simplified form of a coiffure popular during the reign of Trajan (98-107 A. D.), to which time the relief may be assigned. It is one of the admirable character studies of middle class Romans produced during the Flavian period. Inscribed: PETRONIA HEDONE FECIT SIBI | ET L PETRONIO PHILEMONI FILIO | ET LIBERTIS LIBERTABUSQUE | POSTERISQUE EORUM. "Petronia Hedone prepared (this monument) for herself and for her son, Lucius Petronius Philemon, and for her freed-men and freed-women, and for their descendants."

Portrait head of a Roman lady. Graeco-Roman.

This is the portrait of a middle-aged woman with round, full and rather fine features. The modelling of the face is soft and somewhat lacking in life and individuality. The hair is arranged in the fashion of the Flavian period, but treated in a simpler and less artificial manner than on many examples.

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